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ABSTRACT

Some of the uses of laughter in conversation are examined, specifically as laughter occurs in a second language setting. Although the concepts of humor and laughter are often intertwined, not all laughter is humorous, nor does every humorous event evoke laughter. Furthermore, cross-cultural difference can contribute to misinterpretation of laughter in certain situations. A powerful conversational force, laughter demands recognition by transcending traditional turn-taking boundaries and producing much overlap, while often concluding as a shared achievement between participants. Also considered is the relationship between laughter and the notion of face. The mutual vulnerability of face entices most people to cooperate with each other in interaction. Because there is a tendency to defend one's own face when threatened, it is advantageous to maintain another's face. Because laughter can intensify or diminish the force of a face-threatening action, the dynamics of an interaction must be carefully considered when assessing face. Excerpts from a Dominican Spanish conversation involving several native speakers and a non-native speaker are analyzed and classified using a newly-developed typology. Examples clearly demonstrate that laughter has multiple faces that are subject to interpretation based on context and the relationship between the parties involved. (Author/MSE)

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Abstract: "The Multiple Faces of Conversational Laughter"

This paper examines some of the uses and effects of laughter in conversation, specifically as it occurs in a second language setting. Although the concepts of laughter and humor are often intertwined, certainly not all laughter is humorous, nor does every humorous event evoke laughter. Furthermore, cross-cultural differences can contribute to the misinterpretation of laughter in certain situations. A powerful conversational force, laughter demands recognition by transcending traditional turn-taking boundaries and producing much overlap while often concluding as a shared achievement between participants.

Also considered is the relationship between laughter and the notion of face (Brown and Levinson 1987; Goffman 1967). The "mutual vulnerability of face" (Brown and Levinson 1986:61) entices most people to cooperate with each other in interaction. Because there is a tendency to defend one's own face when threatened, it advantageous to maintain another's face. And since laughter can either intensify or diminish the force of a face-threatening action, the dynamics of an interaction must be carefully considered when assessing face.

Excerpts from a Dominican Spanish conversation involving several native speakers and a non-native speaker of Spanish are analyzed and classified within a newly-developed typological framework. Examples clearly demonstrate that laughter has multiple faces that are subject to interpretation based on context and the relationship between the parties involved.

1. Introduction. Laughing is one of the few things that people do simultaneously in conversation (cf. Sacks 1992, Vol. II). Primarily a social activity, laughter usually occurs in the presence of others and is most enjoyed when others participate. In fact, not only is it acceptable to laugh together, but solo laughter is often suspect (Edmonson 1987).

Laughter is one manifestation of a complex network of emotions that can be displayed in a variety of manners. Edmondson (1987) identifies three laugh patterns including 1) mild laughter - often monosyllabic and of brief duration, 2) real amusement - involving less glottalization and normally lasting more than one second and 3) intense laughter - several sequential utterances separated by gasping for breath. Laughter encodes a wide range of interpretable messages, "feigned or sincere, revealing and sometimes involuntary" (Edmonson 1987:26). Its sounds grade into one another without fixed boundaries: chuckles, giggles, laughs and guffaws, with a myriad of sounds in between, each having its own culturally unique meaning (Burling 1992).

People in all cultures smile and laugh, albeit for a variety of reasons. There are universal tendencies for laughter as well as a variety of culture-specific stimuli. The notion of laughter in our culture is most immediately associated with humor. Although the two concepts are often intertwined, certainly not all laughter is humorous, nor does every humorous event evoke laughter (Berlyne 1969, Chapman & Foot 1976). Conversational laughter has many faces that are subject to interpretation based on context and the relationship of parties involved.

2. Conversation. Conversation is a continuous activity in which people are expected to demonstrate that they are talking to each other about the same things. Participants in conversation are required not only to construct sentences but also "to coordinate, in a meaningful fashion, their talk with the talk of others present" (Goodwin 1981:ix). Conversation is regulated by turns. Usually only one person talks at a time; if two people do begin speaking at once, one usually drops out.

Interlocutors typically tend to alternate turns at certain intervals known as transition relevance places, or TRPs, "a legitimate and expectable place for a recipient to respond in the course of an ongoing utterance" (Jefferson 1979:81), making for a smooth exchange of talk. Turn-taking norms form part of the overall communicative competence that native speakers "use and rely on in participating in everyday conversation" (Atkinson and Heritage 1984:1). Although participants do not usually think about norms or "rules" when they are engaged in conversation, they naturally observe some semblance of order so that their comments will be understood.

Most conversations tend to operate within the framework of Grice's (1975:47) Cooperative Principle:

> Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

and its four Conversational Maxims: 1) Quantity - Make your contribution as informative as is required but no more informative than is necessary; 2) Quality - Do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence; 3) Relation - Make your contribution relevant; 4) Manner - Avoid obscurity and ambiguity; be brief and be orderly.

Although conversations are generally collaborative in nature, interlocutors do not strictly adhere to these maxims. In fact, from time to speakers flagrantly and obviously violate one or more of them; these violations can sometimes result in laughter. Furthermore, the maxims often lose their force in the presence of laughter as relevance and succintness take a back seat to enjoyable social contact (Norrick 1994).

3. NS/NNS Interactions. Native speakers (NSs) of any language have an array of linguistic resources "which can be drawn on selectively ... to realize or accomplish different ends" (Philips 1987:86). Extensive vocabularies and knowledge of a broad range of language structures and styles which can be accessed in any situation allow them to converse easily. Second language (L2) learners, however, necessarily have more limited lexical and syntactic capabilities and can operate within fewer contexts. Therefore, when these two types of speakers engage in conversation, the possibilities for problems are tremendous. The situation becomes even more complex as their cultural differences are revealed.

The two roles in any conversation, speaker and hearer, shift many times throughout the course of an interaction. Since conversation is a collaborative achievement (Ferrara 1992; Duranti 1986; Brenneis 1986; Schegloff 1982; Goodwin 1979), speakers often alter the nature of their discourse based on hearer's responses (Chafe 1994). While responding to hearer needs is second nature to NSs, the task becomes somewhat more difficult when NNSs are involved.

Traditionally, speaking has been considered the more active role while listening has been seen as the more passive one. In L2 conversations, however, hearing becomes more challenging for NSs and NNSs alike. Hearers take on a more participatory role as listening becomes "a necessary preliminary condition for comprehension" (Bublitz 1988:169). Not only must hearers listen with extra care to what is being said, but they must also comprehend the utterances and constantly "be preparing themselves to respond to what they are hearing" (Shotter 1993:51).

4. The notion of "face." Face (Brown & Levinson 1987; Goffman 1967) is an integral part of the analysis of any interaction and is certainly relevant to the study of laughter. Brown & Levinson (1987:61) describe face as something that "all competent adult members of a society have and know each other to have, the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself consisting in two related aspects: 1) negative face - freedom of action and freedom from imposition and 2) positive face - the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' claimed by interactants." Each interlocutor has certain interactional goals as well as the need for approval. Face must constantly be attended to while speaking, and the "mutual vulnerability of face" (Brown and Levinson 1987:61) entices most speakers to at least make the attempt to pay attention to it.

According to Brown and Levinson, acts which might threaten the negative face of the hearer include orders and requests; suggestions and advice; reminders; warnings and threats; offers; promises; compliments and expressions of strong (negative) emotions. Acts which might offend the speaker's negative face are thanking, making excuses, accepting offers, responding to faux pas, and mitigating. Acts which can threaten the positive face of the hearer are disapproval, criticism or ridicule; contradictions or disagreement; challenges; expressions of violent emotions, mention of taboo topics and blatant non-cooperation. Potentially threatening to the speaker's positive face apologizing, accepting compliments, confessing, losing emotional or physical control and humiliating oneself.

Incomplete grammatical competence can be inherently face-threatening to NNSs as it often causes misunderstanding and/or can render speakers incapable of conveying their exact thoughts. Moreover, NNSs who lack experience in participating in conversation with NSs may not yet have a highly developed sense of strategic competence, "the mastery of communication strategies that may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication" (Swain 1984:189), so it can be difficult for them to navigate interactional obstacles. Laughter can be rather effective in these situations, prolonging the exchange and allowing them additional time to gather their thoughts while signalling good will. In the interim, they may be able to interpret a previously unintelligible utterance, reformulate their own utterance or even elicit assistance from their interlocutor.

In the midst of a conversation when face-threatening situations arise, speakers typically employ face saving acts (FSAs), "habitual and standardized practices" (Goffman 1967:13) for counteracting incidents that threaten face. Each subculture and society seems to have its own set of face-saving practices all of which are part of a finite set. In addition, all NSs have in their linguistic repetoires particular FSAs that they regularly call on to extricate themselves from such situations. Cross-language encounters, however, necessarily complicate the face-maintenance process.

Goffman (1967) discusses two kinds of face-work that are available to speakers in any interaction: 1) the avoidance process ---> stay out of situations where FTAs might occur; avoid topics that might elicit FTAs, change

the topic, omit things that might embarrass others, phrase replies with ambiguity to preserve the others' face. make a joke, offer an explanation, terminate the I/A, ignore the FTA, openly acknowledge the event but deny the FTA and 2) the corrective process ---> acknowledge the FTA and try to correct via challenge, offering, acceptance or thanks. These actions are certainly more easily accomplished in one's L1. Moreover, although conversations between NSs and NNSs are prime locations for the occurrence of FTAs, not all cross-language encounters can be considered face-threatening. Careful analysis is a prerequisite for the proper classification of laughter as it is related to face.

5. Laughter in Conversation. Laughter is a valuable conversational technique that has a multitude of functions in conversation. At times, its purpose may be somewhat ambiguous; in other instances, its meaning is apparent to all. Laughter can be classified in one of two ways: 1) as a face-saving action or 2) as a face-threatening action which runs contrary to the desires of either speaker or hearer. In addition, laughter can intensify or diminish the force of an FTA.

Though laughter has now attained official conversational status in the literature (Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff 1987:156), it has only been recognized as a valid area of study during recent years. In fact, many participants in and students of conversation still "find it reasonable and adequate to describe laughter by noticing that it has occurred and not much more" (Jefferson 1985:27). It is difficult to understand why this vital interactional feature was overlooked for so long.

Laughter is one of a number of non-speech sounds which occur in conversation and can disrupt ongoing talk. Yet it can be distinguished from other such sounds in that it can be considered an official conversational activity (Jefferson, Sacks & Schegloff 1987). Unlike talk, laughter thrives on overlap and at times causes participants to take time out from speaking until the laughter subsides.

Laughter may enter a conversation in a variety of ways: 1) offered by speaker, produced voluntarily by recipients or 3) picked up by overhearers, Speaker laughter, "the occasional brief laughs speakers intermingle with their utterances" (Cox 1982:3), may be used to indicate that something funny is coming up in the conversation, to initiate shared laughter or to express a speaker's attitude about what is being said.

Speaker laughter can assume an apologetic stance aimed at disguising ignorance (Giles and Oxford 1978:97-98) or act "as a framing device for potentially ambiguous comments" (Sacks unpublished manuscript, cited in Cox 1982:1). This might be a strategy preferred by (but not limited to) NNSs of lower proficiency levels. Unsure of the structure of their utterances, these speakers may use laughter as a buffer, a sort of face-saving mechanism that accompanies their turn.

Responses to speaker laughter include the following: a) recipient laughter - constitutes acceptance of a 'laugh invitation,' b) recipient

silence - may indicate a misunderstanding of the utterance by the hearer (commonplace in NS/NNS interactions) or may generate further pursuit of laughter by the speaker and c) recipient non-laughing speech - declines the speaker's laugh invitation (could be perceived as an FTA) - then allows the conversation to continue.

Not at all random, laughter is strategically located at a TRP so that a participant who wishes to respond to, comment about or elaborate on what the current speaker is saying may employ laughter to latch on to the very next turn and to occupy a slot that might have been reserved for another speaker. Thus, laughter can function an effective means of taking the floor in conversation. This is important, since the next turn is a typically sought-after commodity.

Laughter is commonly used as a backchannelling device to reinforce or respond to the current speaker, lending support and agreement to what is being said. It can be used in a joking manner to tease, amuse, display intimacy or frame an interaction as playful (Glenn 1987). Teasing, however, sets up a laughing *at* rather than a laughing *with* relationship between teaser and victim and has the potential for creating a face-threatening situation.

Laughter by NSs at NNSs' speech errors may be perceived by NNSs as threatening in one instance whereas, in a more amiable situation, the laughter can invite NNSs to join in, their resulting shared laughter acknowledging the error and showing "like-minded orientation towards the laughable item" (Glenn 1989:140). As a comment on form, laughter assumes a metalinguistic function (Jakobson cited in Norrick 1994) by allowing interlocutors to "point to and agree on what is a funny construction or word choice" (Norrick 1994:17) and helps them to negotiate grammar and meaning.

Interactional, or shared laughter, can occur even if the current speaker does not participate, being picked up by overhearers or other conversational participants. As a "direct appeal for mutuality" (Edmondson 1987:29), laughter encourages others to join in. The functions of shared laughter are many: 1) displays like-mindedness among speakers, 2) regulates temporal and structural aspects of surrounding conversation by serving as a turn-taking cue or a topic-ending indicator, 3) conveys meaning by substituting for lexical constructions, 4) delivers implicit messages which affect the interaction on a more metacommunicative level, 5) carries information about the content, the interpersonal relationships, and/or the personal or emotional nature of an ongoing relationship between individuals or as a member of the group and 6) displays affiliation among participants or to allow speakers to align themselves against a particular group.

Laughter also has a dark side that cannot be overlooked. It can be used to 1) interrupt, 2) comment on form (usually by NS), 3) disguise ignorance, 4) disagree, 5) challenge, 6) contradict, 7) disapprove, 8) boast, 9) brag, 10) mitigate, 11) ridicule, 12) taunt, 13) make uneasy and 14) cause trouble for. All of these categories "appear to violate or push against conversational norms" (Cox 1982:9) resulting in situations that might be face-threatening. However, each conversation must be evaluated on an individual basis, taking into account the context and participants before rendering

judgment on the function of laughter.

A critical step in understanding the functions of laughter is "determination of actions that are being performed by speakers through their utterances" (Labov and Fanshel 1977:60). Table 1 (SEE HO - page 4) is a typology that can be used to classify laughter into its various domains and functions. Starting with categories used by Labov and Fanshel 1977 and incorporating many others, I developed this framework which accounts for both face-saving and face-threatening functions of laughter. The numbers refer to examples, some of which will be discussed in detail below.

TABLE I. Functions of Laughter in Conversation

Domain	Face-saving Functions	Face-threatening Functions
Metalinguistic	Backchannelling device Response (1) Quotative Overlap/positive interruption (2) Topic-ending indicator (3) Turn-taking cue Negotiate grammar & meaning (11) Show understanding	Interrupt Take the floor Comment on form Disguise ignorance
Evaluative	Agree Reinforce (2,4) Support (5,6) Accept (7,8) Express amusement [by speaker] Indicate non-seriousness Display positive emotions Mitigate	Express amusement [by hearer] Disagree Challenge (10) Contradict (9) Display negative emotions Express disapproval Boast, brag Mitigate (10)
Joking	Gain acceptance Tease Confirm in-group identity (7,12,13) Display intimacy Amuse or express amusement (8)	Ridicule Taunt (14)

6. Data Collection. Data for this project were collected in the city of Santiago in the Dominican Republic during the summer of 1991.[1] Participants include the mother and father, two girl children 14 and 10 years old and their NNS houseguest. Their 17 year old son is present but does not speak. This particular conversation was selected for analysis because it is literally riddled with laughter. It should be noted that the NNS in this conversation is of advanced proficiency. The conversation is one that took place just before lunch one day. Transcription conventions used in examples can be found in Appendix I.

7. **The classification of laughter.** I have identified three domains within which laughter can be classified: 1) meta-linguistic, 2) evaluative and 3) joking. Furthermore, I have separated laughter's functions into face-saving and face-threatening actions.

7.1. **Meta-linguistic Domain.** One of the functions of laughter is concerned with the regulation of speech itself. Speakers engage in metalinguistic actions when they are doing something other than merely taking their turn. This includes actions such as backchannelling, regulating the flow of conversation and interrupting (in either a positive or negative manner).

Laughter helps with the management of conversation serving as a turn-taking cue or a topic-ending indicator. In certain instances it may mark a temporary end to speaking so that talk can be resumed only after most of the laughter has subsided. Laughter may function as a "post-unit-completion device which acoustically highlights a first speaker's TRP, rendering a second speaker's self-selection more probable" (O'Donnell-Trujillo and Adams 1983:184ff). Laughter can also be useful when speakers wish to steer the conversation in a new direction by serving as an end to the current line of talk and paving the way for discussion of a new topic.

Example 1 shows laughter used by the hearer to respond to a speaker's utterance. Participants are watching a TV program (a telenovela, or soap opera):

(1)
22 S: ¡Qué vestido!=
23 C: =M(hhh)m=
24 S: =¡qué piernita!
25 C: [ehihi
26 S: [ehaha
.
.
.
34 M: Está como ??? pero tiene el cuerpo???
¡Qué vestido, qué piernita!=
35 S: =ehuh

In 22 and 24 S comments on the body parts and clothing of one of the women on TV; C responds with laughter in 23 and 25. S responds with her own laughter in 26. Later, in 34, M repeats S's prior utterances, causing S to laugh.

Example 2 contains laughter and repetition of two different kinds:

(2)
133 JM: [Heheh..éso es un garrote.
134 M: [Heheh, garrote.

Not only does M use the same phonological type of laughter, but she repeats the lexical item as well. Her utterance overlaps (a form of interruption, in this case a positive one) and reinforces JM's utterance.

Example 3 which contains within-speech laughter used as a topic-ending indicator:

(3) 148 JM: (cantando a la mexicana...) *Nohombre*
149 M: [Nohombre
150 JM: [*Nohombre*..Los mexicanos sí hablan cantando porque dicen, "*ándale*..."
151 S: U(hhh)uh.

ABRUPT TOPIC SHIFT...

152 M: ??? Van a dar nada más cada mes siete horas de conversación por lo que tú pagas. Y después todo lo de ahí y en adelante...

JM has been delivering his assessment of how many Mexicans speak using a sing-song type voice. S's laughter and agreement mark a natural end to the topic being discussed and allow the conversation to flow in another direction.

7.2. Evaluative Domain. This category encompasses a class of acts where the speaker or hearer expresses an attitude about what was said or done. Speaker laughter tells the hearer how the speaker sees a particular utterance, e.g. ironically, sarcastically, facetiously, with disdain or amusement, etc. Hearer laughter can be used positively to: 1) agree, 2) indicate hearership, 3) express amusement or 4) display other positive emotions; or it can be used negatively to: 5) disagree (by contradiction and challenge), 6) mitigate, 7) boast or brag, 8) disapprove, 9) self-deprecate or 10) display other negative emotions.

In Example 4, S comments on the character of one of the stars in the soap opera and follows it with laughter which reinforces her opinion:

(4) 65 S: Ese ladrón! Heheheheh
66 C: [ehihihi
67 JM: [Heheheh
68 M: [ehaha...*woo-hoo*!

Here, S laughs at her own utterance[2], an action that could be construed as "boasting or self-praise" (Glenn 1989:137). But in this case, C, JM and M's laughing responses show that they S's opinion.

Shared laughter also abounds in Example 5:

(5) 106 M: Yo te cuido, yo te cuido...hahaha
107 C: [ehihihi
108 Mon: [Uheh
109 M: [??? Con un pedazo de palo, heheh. Estoy llegando de noche de la universidad. No quiero problemas. Si alguien trata (hhh)de hahaha

110 C: [ehuhuhuh
111 M: [haha
112 S: [eheheh
113 M: [defenderme...
114 S: [Heheheh
115 M: [Parece que tú
te ibas(hhh)a acabar con alguien, heheh.
116 S: Bueno. ??? Heh heh. ???
117 C: [ehihihi

S has been telling a story of an exchange she had with a guard at the university gate one night when she was leaving later than usual and it was getting dark. In 112 and 114 S indicates her acceptance of M's assessment of the situation by displaying shared laughter along with M and C.

In Example 6, M's laughter expresses amusement over what S says:

1 M: Voy a poner éste...esta hoja.
2 S: ¿Qué es?
3 M: La hoja de anís. ???
4 S: [Parece medicina de curandero.
5 M: [Ehahaha. Es lo que va ?????

M is adding a spice to the dish she is preparing for lunch. Curious, S asks what it is in 2. M calls it by name in 3, and in 4 S comments that it looks like the medicine used by a curandero, a Mexican healer who uses herbs to effect many cures. M finds this funny and laughs in 5, then continues her explanation. This laughter might initially be seen as face-threatening, since M is laughing *at* what S said; but it could also be interpreted as an indication of understanding and agreement with S's statement.

The next examples will show laughter used to throw doubt on the proposition that the other person endorses. Example 7 demonstrates how laughter is used by S to contradict what JM said:

(7) 138 JM: Es como la política que usaba que parecía simpático
139 S: [heheh
140 JM: [con los otros países pero tenía un garrote hinchado cuando descuidaban.

JM continues his explanation of the term garrote (stick) using Roosevelt as an example. He begins describing his political tactics as simpático, or 'nice,' and S, with her advanced level of proficiency, is able to predict what might be coming next, probably something sarcastic.' Any sort of laughter expressing contradiction or challenge to current speaker could be interpreted as an FTA, as the speaker is displaying some negative evaluation of the hearer's positive face. It should be noted, however, that in this particular instance the laughter was not intended as threatening, but as agreement of what JM was going to say.

Example 8 represents laughter as a challenge on the part of the speaker:

(8) 160 S: ¿Pero de:larga distancia o...?
161 M: No, local.
162 S: [*Sh(hhh)it*. ¿Siete horas? No(hhh)o.

S is critical of the local phone company's "gift" of seven hours of service per month before beginning to charge on a per-minute basis. Her within-speech laughter serves a two-fold function: 1) to express disbelief and 2) to soften her use of an expletive.[3] Both challenge and mitigation are FTAs in which the speaker is negatively evaluating positive face - that of the hearer as well as her own. But, since her disbelief is directed at the phone company rather than at M (who is merely transmitting information concerning one of the phone company's policies), the force of the FTA is naturally diminished.

The supportive use of laughter by hearers in the next examples particularly highlights the operation of positive politeness. The wants and desires of speaker(s) and hearer(s) coincide (Brown and Levinson 1987:101ff) as laughter is used as a marker of solidarity with 1) teasing in a manner that stresses shared background or values and 2) using slang or jargon to confirm in-group identity.

In Example 9, S gets teased by several others, and her error is celebrated with shared laughter:

(9) 99 S: Uh, favor de:de pararse allá y cuidarme.
100 C: [ehihihi
101 Mon: [Heheheh
102 M: [Hahaha. ¿Favor de pararse allá y cuidarme? heh heh heh Vigílame desde allí.

Another excerpt from the conversation with the guard at the university. This laughter could certainly be interpreted initially as a FTA since others are laughing at what she said. Furthermore, M's repetition in 102 of what S said in 99 coupled with her laughter and rephrasal "identifies a whole stretch of speech in need of correction" (Norrick 1989:7). But this adjusment was not meant to be critical. On the contrary, it was offered in a teaching spirit, because poking fun at questionable constructions or vocabulary it helps speakers (in this case NNSs) clarify what is acceptable and not acceptable forms of speech (Norrick 1993). In 99 S used a more formal construction when a simple imperative would have sufficed. The open and intimate nature of the relationship between S and her host family fostered S's acceptance of M's rephrasal so that S did not feel threatened by the correction.

In Example 10, laughter is used to confirm in-group identity:

(10) 141 M: Dale una cachada...
142 S: [¡un chinga:zo!/
143 C: [ehihihihi
144 M: [¡AY, AY, AY!
145 JM: Un palo, un chingazo...heheheh
146 M: Mira cómo le gustó...*AH:hah*

The lexical item in 142 is quite strong in much of the Spanish-speaking world. S uses it, and C (age 10) laughs. M attempts to mitigate S's word choice with her utterance in 144, but JM repeats S's words in 145 ending with his own laughter in acknowledgement and appreciate of S's use of *mexicanismos*. In 146 M decides that, since JM was not offended by what S said, she will share in the laughter as well.

The last example sees laughter displayed in a more derisive manner. In Example 11, C's laughter is apparently not interpreted by M as being humorous:

(11) 17 M: ¡A probarla! Ay, chila... <<¡YOW!>>
18 C: [ehihihi
19 M: [Anda, Claudia,
¿se han venido? Ve cómo se ??? tienda la ropa afuera. Tal vez la lavadora lavada ya. Ay, que no me acordaba, para que la lleve limpia papá que no quiero que lleve la ropa sucia. Tiéndela afuera. Este, abre la puerta y la tiendes. Yo quiero que él lleve la ropa limpia. ¿No ves a nadie? Voy a añadir...Tocaron en el vidrio y yo vi la sombra ahí.

C's laughter in 18 responds to M's exclamation in 17 as she burned her tongue when tasting the dish she was preparing. The laughter likely alerted M to C's presence since, up to this point, C had not spoken. Although not sounding particularly malicious, this laughter may nonetheless have been construed as an FTA, since M's retort in 19 contains a number of imperatives (indicated by underlining) directed at C.

8. Conclusion. The data presented here reveal a diversity of functions of laughter in conversation. It may be used by speaker or hearer to respond to, reflect on or embellish what has been said previously. This conversation illustrated many face-saving and some face-threatening functions of laughter. A powerful conversational force, laughter has a light side that invites support and agreement as well as a darker side that disagrees, challenges or ridicules.

The overall positive tone of this particular conversation coupled with the noticeable intimacy between family members and their houseguest, S, demonstrates how laughter can break down the separation of face and diminish the force of certain FTAs. A different distribution of the functions of

laughter would necessarily be found in other interactions. Thus, in order to correctly classify the many occurrences of conversational laughter, both context and the relationship between interlocutors must be carefully considered.

Notes

[1] Funding for this trip was courtesy of a Living Abroad Scholarship provided by the Jordan Institute at Texas A&M University.

[2] This does not support Glenn's (1989:134) notion that "generally, in multi-party interactions, someone other than current speaker provides the first laugh."

[3] This follows Cox's (1982:11) line of reasoning: "It may be that more socially skilled speakers use speaker laughter to mitigate their challenges, whereas the less skilled to not."

[4] This touches on Carrell's (1995) notions of joke and humor competence in that it shows that a NNS of advanced proficiency who has developed a certain amount of humor competence.

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APPENDIX I
TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The following transcription conventions are used in presentation of the data:

[	overlapping utterances
=	contiguous utterances
CAPS	extremely loud voice
<< >>	high-pitched voice
underline	singing voice
:	pause
'	accented syllable
hhh	audible aspiration, laughter
ye(hhh)s	within-speech aspiration, laughter
heheh	laughter
ehihihi	laughter
hahaha	laughter
ehuhuh	laughter